

**Friis, John**

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**From:** Heather Gallinoto [mom2madlil@sbcglobal.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 15, 2009 12:05 PM  
**To:** Friis, John  
**Cc:** eca\_pace@yahoo.com  
**Subject:** HB6666, Section 5

The letter below was written by my cousin, Jana Clark, a former student of the ECA program. Jana has become who she is today, largely in part due to the opportunities that ECA afforded her as well as the support that she received from the "Uncertified" staff. Clearly they have had a life changing impact on Jana, as well as all of the future students that Jana will share her love of Literature and reading with.

To say that Jana's teenage years were difficult is an understatement. I often think about what would have become of her if she had not become so interested in her academics. If she had been in a traditional school setting only, I fear that she would have become a statistic, rather than the accomplished adult that she has become.

The students that are involved in the ECA program are the future of the Arts. I implore you not to cut this vital program.

Heather Gallinoto  
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Dear Representative Fleischmann, Senator Gaffey, and members of the Education Committee,

I am writing to strongly advocate for Sec.5 of House Bill H6666, which will allow for adjunct faculty certificates to be issued to the highly-trained professional artists, who serve as ECA's part-time faculty, to continue their 35-year record of preparing Connecticut's high-school students for our competitive global economy. If they are required to become certified for 10-hour per week part-time positions, they will not be able to do so and the school will close. This will be a terrible loss to Connecticut's high school students in 19 school districts.

In addition, parents must be allowed to pay privately if their school districts do not cover tuitions to ECA. Students who pay privately make up 25% of the school; not allowing students whose school districts cannot cover tuitions (and this year's school-district budgets have already been set) will have the effect of depriving both students whose districts cannot pay AND students whose districts are able to pay of an extraordinary education at ECA, because ECA cannot lose 25% of its students and survive.

I myself began my journey at ECA in August 2001. The faculty members of the Creative Writing department there fostered not only my love for learning and passion for writing, but also became confidants who saw me through excruciatingly painful times in my life. After losing my mother to mental illness in my sophomore year (2002-2003), I was without direction and purpose. At ECA, though, I was surrounded by those who I can only refer to as family; those who gave me the tools by which to deal with my loss. Over the course of my high school career there, I immersed myself in all forms of creative writing: poetry, screenplay, memoir, humor, fiction, and creative non-fiction, but could not have done so without the limitless talents of the faculty mentors at ECA. My senior year (2004-2005), I was recognized by the Hamden Arts Commission during their Salute to Young Artists where I was able to perform some of the poems I had written at ECA. Additionally, I also received the Julia B. DeCapua Scholarship that year from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven based on work I had done in the Creative Writing department. The instruction I received from the faculty artists at ECA promoted not only my academic, but also my personal success and gave me the depth and confidence I needed to succeed not only in high school, but also in college.

The foundations of creative writing, which I learned at ECA, have allowed me to make distinct and valuable contributions to the English literature community. In addition to giving me unique insight into the works I have dealt with as a student of English literature, ECA provided me with the necessary building blocks to become both a competent reader and critical writer. After being inducted into the International English Honor Society in 2007, I was asked to present a critical paper, an exposition of and commentary on female friendships in William Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, at their annual convention. These honors and my 3.72 GPA in English literature courses are a true testament to the lifelong impact ECA has had on me.

As a double major in Secondary Education, I certainly understand the importance of certification among teachers. I do believe, however, that the talents of these practicing artists and their continued contributions to their art forms unmistakably mark them as "highly qualified." Additionally, schools across the nation are struggling to incorporate the constructivist methods, which are highly recognized as gateways to student success. At ECA and particularly in the Creative Writing department, these methods are the basis of the curriculum. Students are assessed in unique ways and are continually asked to self-reflect. Cooperative learning is at the core of the ECA experience and instruction is tailored to the unique learning styles of each student. The faculty artists' expertise and competence in the various media which they teach emphatically illustrate their ability to not only instruct, but to guide students to their fullest potential.

It would be utterly devastating to see a school of such high caliber, which offers such a unique set of curriculum, close. It would be a detriment to many future students and the surrounding community as well. Please help this school continue its amazing program.

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Jana H. Clark  
ECA, Creative Writing '05  
Roger Williams University, B.A. English Literature; Secondary Education, '09

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